

Central Intelligence Agency



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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

23 August 1983

US-Pakistan: Military Implications of Harpoon Sale [redacted]

Summary

The sale of 16 submarine-launched Harpoon antiship missiles to Pakistan will significantly improve the offensive capabilities of the Pakistan Navy, but it will have little impact on India's naval superiority or Pakistan's limited ability to intervene independently in the Persian Gulf. The Harpoon sale increases the potential for limited Pakistani military cooperation with the United States in a Persian Gulf conflict. [redacted]

The Pakistan Navy, like most other navies with Harpoons, could have difficulty targeting the missile, particularly if the intended target is beyond the line of sight. Pakistan intends to upgrade its navigation and electronic support measures systems, however, to improve the Navy's ability to use the Harpoon to its maximum range. [redacted]

The Harpoon sale will give added impetus to India's efforts to increase its naval superiority over Pakistan--particularly to obtain advanced antiship missiles, close-in naval air defense weapons, and sophisticated electronic warfare and antisubmarine warfare systems. [redacted]

Pakistan plans to buy 16 submarine-launched Harpoon antiship missiles from the United States in FY 1984. The Harpoons, which are scheduled for delivery in 1986, will be deployed aboard Pakistan's two French-supplied Agosta submarines. The US Embassy in Islamabad reports that Pakistan is interested in later

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] South Asia Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis, in response to questions raised by Howard Schaffer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. Information as of August 22, 1983 was used in preparation of this paper. Comments and queries are welcome and should be addressed to Chief, South Asia Division [redacted]

purchases of the air- and surface-launched versions of the Harpoon. Pakistan would deploy surface-launched Harpoons on its five US Gearing-class destroyers and on the new European frigates that it plans to purchase in the mid-1980s. []

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Impact on Pakistan Navy Capabilities

Pakistan's Harpoon missiles will not have all of the same system components as US Navy Harpoons but nonetheless will substantially boost Pakistan's naval firepower and provide improved naval missile technology []

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[] At present, Pakistan's naval strength lies principally in its Gearing destroyers, Agosta and smaller French Daphne coastal submarines, and a small inventory of air-launched French Exocet and ship-launched Chinese Styx antiship missiles. The Harpoon will have better target discrimination capabilities and greater effective range than Exocet and Chinese Styx now in the Pakistan Navy or the modern Soviet Styx antiship missiles in the Indian Navy. The missile also will be more resistant to electronic countermeasures (see table). []

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The over-the-horizon attack capability of the Harpoon could cause targeting difficulties for the Pakistan Navy because the missile's radar seeker cannot discriminate between an intended target and other ships in the target area (see annex). Other navies to which the Harpoon has been sold could have the same difficulties. A US Navy evaluation concluded that the Pakistan Navy's ability to accurately target ships over the horizon is presently inadequate but can be made sufficient before the first Harpoon deliveries if Pakistan makes specific recommended purchases to upgrade navigation and electronic support measures systems. (Electronic support measures provide electronically-acquired information for naval weapon systems to assist in identifying and targeting ships.) The Pakistanis told the US Navy evaluation team that they intend to correct targeting deficiencies by purchasing an inertial navigation system for their Atlantique maritime patrol aircraft, which would pass the location of enemy ships to the missile-carrying submarine for most over-the-horizon shots, as well as a satellite navigation system and enhanced electronic support measures package for the Agosta submarines. []

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Impact on the India-Pakistan Naval Balance

The acquisition of Harpoon antiship missiles is the Pakistan Navy's highest modernization priority, in our view, because of India's overwhelming naval superiority. The smaller and older Pakistan Navy cannot contain Indian naval operations, and we believe it either would be bottled up in port or quickly defeated at sea in wartime. Pakistani [] Navy is most concerned about India's growing capability to blockade Karachi-- Pakistan's only naval base and port for maritime commerce. In

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the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war, India used a Styx antiship missile against Karachi. [REDACTED]

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The Harpoon will greatly increase Pakistan's offensive naval capability against the Indian Navy. Indian warships could not electronically jam the Harpoon even though Pakistan's missiles will have a degraded counter-electronic warfare capability compared to US Navy Harpoons. Indian warships do not have a radar-directed close-in gun or missile defense system capable of shooting down the Harpoon. India is particularly concerned about the vulnerability of its aircraft carrier to attack by Harpoon missiles [REDACTED]

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The Pakistan Navy also will be able with submarine-launched Harpoons to threaten Indian naval and merchant vessels far from Karachi, potentially distracting the Indian Navy from a blockade of the Pakistani port. Pakistan's Styx-armed Chinese missile patrol boats are too small and have too limited range to operate far from port. Pakistan cannot use Exocet missiles beyond the limited range of the Navy's Sea King helicopters or the combat radius of the Air Force's Mirage fighters, one squadron of which will be converted to fire Exocets later this year. Pakistan's Agosta submarines, however, could threaten Indian naval or maritime shipping anywhere in the Arabian Sea and all along India's western coastline, including the naval bases at Bombay and Cochin. [REDACTED]

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In our view, the submarine-launched Harpoon will have a greater impact on the India-Pakistan naval balance than the air- or surface-launched versions. The Indian Navy's limited antisubmarine warfare capabilities could not prevent Pakistani submarines from approaching Indian warships undetected to within 10 nautical miles, a distance at which they could launch the Harpoon without having to rely on a supporting aircraft or ship to provide targeting data. Pakistani aircraft or surface ships armed with Harpoons would be much more vulnerable to detection, interception, and possible destruction before they could threaten Indian warships. [REDACTED]

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Although Pakistani Harpoons would make a naval war more costly to the Indians, they will not, in our view, significantly reduce India's naval superiority. India continues to strengthen its Navy with more modern ships and weapons and is increasing its nearly three-to-one advantage in major naval combatants. We believe that the number of Harpoons that Pakistan plans to buy in its first purchase of the missile--and the number it could afford to buy in the future when India's naval strength is also increasing--will be too small to cause serious attrition of the Indian Navy. India also has naval air superiority that would enable it to attack Pakistani warships at sea with near impunity and the Karachi naval and air base with relatively light losses. Airstrikes against the Karachi bases could destroy Pakistan's Agosta submarines in port or, if both were at sea,

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seriously damage the logistics infrastructure necessary to support sustained operations. [REDACTED]

We believe the US sale will give added impetus to Indian plans to acquire new antiship missiles and to improve antimissile defenses aboard its ships. The Indian Navy recently concluded agreements with France for air-launched Exocet missiles and with Britain for the new Sea Eagle air-launched missile. Both are scheduled for delivery about the same time that Pakistan receives its first Harpoons. None of these missiles could match the capabilities of the Harpoons, but Pakistani warships would be unable to defend against them unless they had close-in air defense systems such as the Vulcan/Phalanx, which they have requested from the United States. We believe that India also eventually will buy more sophisticated electronic countermeasures, radar-directed close-in defense gun and missile systems, and will improve their antisubmarine warfare capability. [REDACTED]

Regional Implications--The Longer Term

We believe that deployment of the submarine-launched Harpoon will do little to increase Pakistan's potential for naval operations in the Persian Gulf in defense of the Arab countries with which it has military ties. The Harpoon would give the Pakistan Navy a formidable offensive capability against Persian Gulf navies--including Iran's--but its Agosta submarines could not conduct sustained operations in the Persian Gulf without access to a local naval base for logistics support. The submarines also would be more vulnerable to antisubmarine warfare in the confines of the Gulf than in the expanse of the Arabian Sea. In addition, Pakistan, despite its military commitments to many Arab states, wants to avoid involvement in regional conflicts between Islamic countries, [REDACTED]

The planned, later acquisition of surface-launched Harpoons would provide the Pakistan Navy with better capabilities for operations in the Persian Gulf. Major surface combatants such as the Gearing destroyers or the European frigates that Islamabad wants to buy in the next few years could operate for extended periods away from their home port. Pakistani surface ships, however, would themselves be vulnerable to attack by Harpoon antiship missiles, which have also been sold to Iran and Saudi Arabia. Other Arab countries in the Persian Gulf are armed with Exocet or Styx antiship missiles that could also potentially threaten Pakistani ships. [REDACTED]


The sale of Harpoon antiship missiles to Pakistan will strengthen US-Pakistani relations, increase the likelihood of Pakistani military cooperation with the United States, and enable the Pakistan Navy to more effectively support US military operations in the Persian Gulf region. The Harpoon sale would be tangible evidence of US support for Pakistan's security

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interests, especially since the sale cannot be linked to the Soviet threat from Afghanistan. In the event of a Persian Gulf conflict, the Pakistan Navy armed with Harpoon missiles would have the capability, albeit limited, of assisting US naval forces in protecting the security of the sea lanes between the Arabian Sea and the Gulf. 

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Annex: Targeting the Harpoon

The Harpoon antiship missile can be difficult to use in over-the-horizon attacks, particularly for inexperienced navies, because its radar seeker cannot discriminate between ships and will attack the first vessel that it acquires and locks onto. Information on the enemy ship's position, heading, and speed increases the probability of attacking the right ship. Submarine-launched Harpoons can be fired against an enemy ship knowing only its bearing, but other ships located between the attacking submarine and the intended target could easily be hit in such an attack. If range information also were available, the Harpoon could be programmed to activate its radar seeker late in its flight to lessen the chances of attacking the wrong ship.

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Targeting information for over-the-horizon attacks by Harpoon missiles can be provided to the attacking weapons platform by another aircraft, surface ship, or submarine. Sophisticated navigation systems would be required by both the targeting ship or aircraft and the attacking ship to reduce position errors. Navigational errors could result in a Harpoon launch on an imprecise range or bearing that would increase the chances of the missile failing to acquire the enemy ship or attacking the wrong ship in the target area. Passing and correlating accurate targeting data to a submarine for a Harpoon launch is more difficult than to a surface ship because of communications problems associated with undersea operations.

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TABLE: Antiship Missiles in the Pakistan and Indian Navies

<u>Missile</u>	<u>Warhead</u>	<u>Max. Range</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Chinese Styx	515 kg.	25 nm.	Pakistan Navy, deployed on missile patrol boats.
Soviet Styx	480 kg.	45 nm.*	Indian Navy, surface-launched.
French Exocet	165 kg.	40 nm.*	Pakistan Navy, air-launched. Air-launched version on order for Indian Navy.
US Harpoon	227 kg.	75 nm.	Agreement in principle with Pakistan Navy for submarine-launched version.
UK Sea Eagle	180 kg.	95 nm.*	Air-launched version on order for Indian Navy.

* Range varies according to altitude of air launch.

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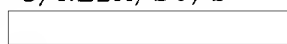
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